

**[E.R. Kaiser]**

W15061

2 [Typed ?] [Dup of ?] 15062

Francis Donovan

Thomaston, Conn

Wednesday, Nov. 16, '38

E.R. Kaiser,

Former Superintendent, Seth Thomas Clock Co.

“Yes, I remember the old Criterion club, and I remember the incident you speak of, but I'm not sure of some of the details. But here it is, near's I can remember. “Seems old John Gross, who had the first car in town, took the battery out one night and brought it down to the club. He left it lying in a corner - and whether he did this with malice aforethought or not I can't say, but he certainly helped the matter along afterwards—and there it reposed until later in the evening when the boys began to gather for a round of pinochle. “Well, just about that time there was a hell of a scare going through the country about these I W W.'s. They had blown up a building or something, someplace, [?] or had got the credit for it anyways, and people were edgy every time the name was mentioned. To make it more interesting, a bum had come through town and been lodged in the lockup the night before, and as you know the cells in the town hall basement are right adjoining the old clubroom—that's the barber shop today.

“One of the [?] boys saw the battery [?] over there in a corner, and of course it was the first such object he'd ever laid eyes on and he didn't know what it was no more'n if it was something from Mars, and the first thing come to his mind was the I. W W.'s and their

## Library of Congress

dirty work. He raised a big [?] hullabaloo about 'infernal machines' and got all the others worked up so's they were afraid to go near it, and those who were a bit timid just grabbed their coats and hats and went.

"Finally one of the braver ones, I can't just say who 'twas, got a pail of water, and he run over quick and doused the battery/ Well all this time, old Johnny Gross and some of the other maybe, that were in on it, were nearly 2 bustin' trying to keep from laughing out loud.

"After it was dunked in water they all felt a little [?] better, but then the problem arose how to dispose of it. Finally somebody hit on the idea of taking it up on the side hill, up in Bradstreet's cow pasture, and setting it off. For they were fully convinced it was a bomb, understand.

"So the next day, they all [?] marched up there, and half the town with them, for by this time the news had got around. They carried it mighty carefully, and when they got it up there, they took it out of the pail, and attached a long fuse to it and somebody, I think it was (the late) G. A. Lemmon, volunteered to set it off. The others gathered at a respectful distance and waited while G. A. lit the fuse and ran like hell. Of course nothing happened, and after while it occurred to them that they were being kidded and they went home feeling foolish. And Johnny Gross went up there that night and got his battery, but he didn't say anything about it till the boys cooled off a little.

"They were always playing tricks in those days The Criterion club was known as a high class organization and their affairs every year were outstanding social events. They used to give a fair for the benefit of the [?] library once a year. And when it was all over they throw a big party for themselves at the clubroom. They had a dandy turkey one year, prepared by Perley Jones' mother, roasted and stuffed to a turn, and they were getting the place fixed up for the dinner and left the bird on that back window sill. Then they went to look for it, it was gone, and the Criterion club had nothing to eat but the fixings. Nobody

## Library of Congress

ever knew whether it was taken for a joke or because somebody was hungry, but the town had a good laugh.”

3

Excerpts from an article appearing several years ago in the Thomaston Express local weekly. (Bylined Willis B. George)

“On the right hand side of the road, going north to Torrington, just this [?] side of Fenn road, is a large three-family home, which goes by the name of the Sailor's Home. No one seems to know how this house got the name, the assumption being a sailor once lived there, but who he was or [?] when he did so is a mystery to the present generation of Thomastonians. But this house [?] is far more distinctive in an [historical?] way for other reasons than that it bears his name. Well over a hundred years ago, this building was a clock factory, and was later the home of other [?] industries. It there for has a part in the industrial history of Thomaston.

Marvin and Edward Blakeslee, descendants of Capt. Thomas Blakeslee, one of the town's earliest settlers, erected this building by the river, to be used for the manufacture of clocks, a business in which they were already engaged. The Blakeslee name, therefor, is one of numerous others, such as Seth Thomas, Silas Hoadley, and Eli Jr, and Henry Terry. The Blakeslees carried on this business for [some ?] years, eventually selling out to Seth Thomas, who bought out or forced out in the process of competition the other local clockmakers, so that the Seth Thomas name is the only one of that early group perpetuated in the manufacture of clocks here today.

“Although Seth Thomas bought out the interests of the company, and the equipment, he centered the manufacturing in his well established plant in the center of the town. The former Blakeslee building became in turn the home of numerous other industries. The first was that of Jerome Woodruff, who built pianos and other musical instruments. A second

## Library of Congress

manufacturer by the name of McCullom built organs there. An organ in use for [?] years at the the old St. Peter's church in Plymouth was one of his products.

4

Later manufacturing of quite a different type went an here. Carrington & Lamb made [?] spools for thread and also spooled the thread itself. Charles Johnson, who was the brother of the well known portrait painter, Horace Johnson, built machinery in this plant, and a Nelson Bradley brought back the touch of Thomaston's best-known industry, clocks, by turning out verges.

"In due time, however, the place fell into the hands of owners who made a radical change in the use of the building, converting it [?] into tenements. The building, which had stood by the banks of the river, ran moved to its present position along the road.

"Unfortunately, the date of this important change is not known. A note by August Wehrle, to whom we are indebted for this historical data, states: 'Many a newly-married couple started housekeeping in this old factory, as the [?] rents were small both in size and in price and a small garden plot was available.'

" Just as the former factory acquired an unusual name, the Sailor's Home, so the spot where it was built had a name to conjure with. This section was known at that time as Heathenville, a name which is used in many authentic records being that given as the location of the Blakeslee factory in Wallace Nutting's 'The Clock Book.' The origin of the name is as vague as that of the house, and whether there was any connection between the sailor and the heathen is not known, old-time sailors, having the name of having a wild lot."

W15062 1 Typed [1?] Typed [20?]

Francis Donovan

## Library of Congress

Thomaston, Conn

Wednesday, Nov. 16, '38

E.R, Kaiser,

Former Superintendent, Seth Thomas Clock Co.

"Yes,I remember the old Criterion club, and I remember the incident you speak of,but I'm not sure of some of the details. But here it is,near's I can remember.

"Seems old John Gross, who had the first car in town, took the batery out one night and brought it down to the club. He left it lying in a corner—and whether he did this with malice aforethought I can't say,but he certainly helped the matter along afterwards—and there it reposed until later in the evening when the boys began to gather for a round of pinochle.

"Well,just about that time there was a hell of a scare going through the country about these I W W.'s. They had blown up a building or something, someplace, [?] or had got the credit for it anyways, and people were edgy every time the name was mentioned. To make it more interesting,a bum had come through town and had lodged in the lockup the night before,and as you know the cells in the town hall basement are right adjoining the old clubroom—that's the barber today.

"One of the [?] boys saw the battery [?] over there in a corner,and of course it was the first such object he'd ever laid eyes on and he didn't know what it was no more'n if it was something from Mars, and the first thing come to his mind was the I.W.W.'s and their dirty work. He raised a big [?] hullababalloo about 'infernal machines' and got all the others worked up so's they were afraid to go near it, and those who were a bit timid just grabbed their coats and hats and went.

## Library of Congress

"Finally one of the braver ones,I can't just say who 'twas,got a pail of water,and he run over quick and doused the battery/ Well all this time, old Johnny Gross and some of the other maybe, that were in on it, were nearly 2 bustin' trying to keep from laughing out loud.

"After it was dunked in water they all felt a little [?] better,but then the problem arose how to dispose of it. Finally somebody hit on the idea of taking it up on the side hill,up in Bradstreet's cow pasture,and setting it off. For they were fully convinced it was a bomb,understand.

"So the next day, they all [?] marched up there, and half the town with them,for by this time the news had got around. They carried it mighty carefully ,and when they got it up there,they took it out of the pail,and attached a long fuse to it and somebody,I think it was (the late) G. A. Lemmon,volunteered to set it off. The others gathered at a respectful distance and waited while G. A. lit the fuse and ran like hell. Of course nothing happened,and after a while it occurred to them that they were being kidded and they went home feeling foolish. And Johnny Gross went up there that night and got his battery, but he didn't say anything about it till the boys cooled off a little.

"They were always playing tricks in those days. The Criterion club was known as a high class organization and their affairs every year were outstanding social events. They used to give a fair for the benefit of the [?] library once a year. And when it was all over they threw a big party for themselves at the clubroom. They had a dandy turkey one year, prepared by Perley Jones' mother,roasted and stuffed to a turn,and they were getting the place fixed up for the dinner and left the bird on that back window sill. When they went to look for it,it was gone,and the Criterion club had nothing to eat but the fixings. Nobody ever knew whether it was taken for a joke or because somebody was hungry,but the town had a good laugh."

## Library of Congress

Excerpts from an article appearing several years ago in the Thomaston Express, local weekly. (Bylined Willis B. George)

“On the right hand side of the road,going north to Torrington,just this [?] side of Fenn road,is a large three-family home,which goes by the name of the Sailor's Home. No one seems to know how this house got the name,the assumption being a sailor once lived there,but who he was or [?] when he did so is a mystery to the present generation of Thomastonians. But this house [?] is far more distinctive in an historical way for other reasons than that it bears his name. Well over a hundred years ago,this building was a clock factory,and was later the home of other [?] industries. It there for has a part in the industrial history of Thomaston.

Marvin and Edward Blakeslee,descendants of Capt. Thomas Blakeslee,one of the town's earliest settlers,erected this building by the river,to be used for the manufacture of clocks,a business in which they were already engaged. The Blakeslee name,therefor,is one of numerous others,such as Seth Thomas,Silas Hoadley,and Eli Jr ,and Henry Terry. The Blakeslees carried on this business for some years,eventually selling out to Seth Thomas, who bought out or forced out in the process of competition the other local clockmakers,so that the Seth Thomas name is the only one of that early group perpetuated in the manufacture of clocks here today.

“Although Seth Thomas bought out the interests of the company,and the equipment,he centered the manufacturing in his well established plant in the center of the town. The former Blakeslee building became in turn the home of numerous other industries. The first was that of Jerome Woodruff,who built pianos and other musical instruments. A second manufacturer by the name of McCullom built organs there. An organ in use for [?] years at the old St. Peter's church in Plymouth was one of his products.

## Library of Congress

Later manufacturing of quite a different type went on here. Carrington & Lamb made [?] spools for thread and also spooled the thread itself. Charles Johnson, who was the brother of the well known portrait painter, Horace Johnson, built machinery in this plant, and a Nelson Bradley brought back the touch of Thomaston's best-known industry, clocks, by turning out verges.

"In due time, however, the place fell into the hands of owners who made a radical change in the use of the building, converting it [?] into tenements. The building, which had stood by the banks of the river, was moved to its present position along the road.

"Unfortunately, the date of this important change is not known. A note by August Wehrle, to whom we are indebted for this historical data, states: 'Many a newly-married couple started housekeeping in this old factory, as the [?] rents were small both in size and in price and a small garden plot was available.'

"Just as the former factory acquired an unusual name, the Sailor's Home, so the spot where it was built had a name to conjure with. This section was known at that time as Heathenville, a name which is used in many authentic records being that given as the location of the Blakeslee factory in Wallace Nutting's 'The Clock Book.' The origin of the name is as vague as that of the house, and whether there was any connection between the sailor and the heathen is not known, old-time sailors, having the name of having a wild lot."